Leadership in Uncertain Times

Federal Librarians Envision Use of Physical Space Through 2020

A report of the FLICC Special Project on Planning for Library Spaces

A project of the Libraries and Emerging Technologies Working Group

September 11, 2008

Overview

- Objective
- Approach
- Results
  - Planning
  - Physical Space
  - Technology
  - Virtual Space
- Lessons Learned

Objective

- Gather input from federal librarians
- Review the literature
- Apply the experience of the Committee to understand:
  - What role librarians play in planning
  - How federal librarians view physical space
  - What impacts technology is having on use
  - How virtual space is emerging in federal libraries
- Present findings in a way that would assist FLICC and its members in the years ahead

Approach

- Survey developed seeking input
- Literature review conducted
- Series of conference calls solicited input on the questions as well as the experiences of the Committee
- Survey responses solicited from a broad array of participants including:
    - FLICC Membership
    - SLA Divisions
    - ALA Round Tables
- Results were analyzed and a full report was written

Results - Planning

- Respondents:
  - Librarians were not the final decision makers - they could only offer suggestions/recommendations/input
  - emphasized marketing value-added services along with documenting the benefit of library use to the organization
  - felt that as technologies change, more space is needed because the library would attract more people, thus adding more computers and access.
- The key is to be proactive and market your library and services before "the hatchet comes down" on budget, space allocation, and staffing.
- Even though there was a 58.6 % saying it would be stable, the committee does not feel like flat funding is actually a stable investment in libraries.
- Electronic information is more like software than traditional paper publications. Keeping track of changes in online information i.e., serials and connecting URL's has become increasingly more time consuming.

Results – Physical Spaces

❖ Respondents:
  ❖ predicted that physical space would remain static or grow, but the missions and functions of libraries are expected to transition to accommodate growing collaborative, meeting and community requirements.
  ❖ Existing space would increasingly be re-purposed.

❖ There is no evidence that the end is near for the traditional library, with print collections and trained staff.

❖ Regardless of space constraints, librarians recognize the need to retain some physical collections—at least in the foreseeable future--due to the high cost of digitization, regulatory requirement, diminishing budgets for acquisition of electronic content, intellectual property issues, and the need to retain technical or historical information in its original form.

❖ Use of off-site storage is diminishing. The diminishing use of off-site storage, along with diminishing shelf space fosters an environment for digital collections.

Results – Virtual Space

- Virtual services in Federal libraries encompass the delivery of traditional information products and services to users and the provision of workspace for both library employees and users throughout an organization.
- Respondents:
  - overwhelmingly stated that services will be offered in print and digitally, with two exceptions: delivery of the library catalog and materials preservation space.
- Factors requiring physical space identified by survey respondents:
  - social need to interact with human and information resources;
  - increasing importance of collaboration in our organizations;
  - budget and staff constraints; and
  - copyright and other policy issues.
- " Federal libraries are embracing the concept of embedded librarians, who have "desks alongside the customers that they support."

Results - Technology

- One of the objects of the survey was to examine the technology presently available and what impact new technology has on federal libraries.
- Respondents:
  - indicated that library workers believe that digital information should be used to complement physical items in a library.
  - 50% believed that technology had little to no effect on physical space, 33% indicated that whether they liked it or not technology would lead to a reduction in space
- A recent study found that college students start searching for information using search engines. Only 2% start with the library. 93% of students are satisfied with the information they retrieve online.
- One problem singular to federal libraries is the issue of IT security.
- In order to compete with information on demand 24 hours a day that the internet provides, libraries are starting to focus less attention on their physical space and collections and more so, on their virtual presence.

Lessons Learned

- There will continue to be a role for physical libraries into the future
- Federal libraries represent a larger role than managing resources. They represent support for research activities that directly address the core missions of their institutions
- As the paradigm of library collections and services changes, the physical library will adapt to new uses
- Federal librarians need to identify their decision-makers and begin the process of educating them about the opportunities available in this paradigm shift
- With budgets flat and costs rising, the research value of collections and physical library spaces will continue to be questioned
- Ultimately, it should be the users of federal libraries that weigh in on the value of their services and the models of service available
- Libraries (and librarians) are more than the individual value of their parts… and they need to be considered as whole units and not as components that can be dismantled and distributed.

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